



Plymouth County Registrar of Deeds John Buckley, and Tony Markella of the registry's building committee, stand before a display of historic deeds in the front lobby of the building in Plymouth. One of the records displayed is a court record for the Cut River Canal, which once connected the Back River in Duxbury and Green Harbor in Marshfield.

## Cut River Canal the original DPW project

continued from page one

"New England mariners from almost the beginning of Pilgrim history have dreaded rounding the Gurnet Peninsula in bad weather," wrote Snow. "Probably it saved the lives of scores by offering a quiet inland waterway between Plymouth, Kingston and Duxbury and Marshfield, and avoiding the dangers of the North Atlantic."

The canal was built with the idea that it could be used

20 out of 24 hours in a day, impassable only at low tide.

The problem with maintaining the canals, Snow wrote, was that major storms caused the path of the river itself to shift across the marshes where it was dug. The Cut River Canal had to be "cleaned out" of debris and mud every year to keep it passable.

Snow found, while traveling up the old canal system for his Yankee article, that many Duxbury residents were unaware of the waterway's history.

"All this time we were meeting people whose summer residences bordered the Cut River — but of the Cut River they knew nothing!" he wrote. "It was quite an experience explaining to the people whose backyards we and the high tide had invaded that this was actually the earliest waterway in New England history."

By 1850, nautical technology had progressed to the point that Gurnet was no longer a danger, and the canal fell into disuse and mostly filled in. It can still be traveled by canoe

or kayak, however.

"Nevertheless, the first American canal in history is a pleasant reminder today of early Pilgrim industry," wrote Snow in his article.

The Cut River Canal is only one of many Duxbury-related historical records in the Plymouth County Registry's archives. They also have the deed for the John Alden House and the King Caesar House, as well as the deed to Duxbury Beach.

Markella said he recently found the deed to "The Cable House," a residence in Duxbury that served as the inland terminus for the second transatlantic telegraph cable. The cable originated in Brest, France and ended at Rosa's Hummock off Duxbury Beach.

The registry also has a rotating display of Plymouth County's early settlements. The current display focuses on Wareham, and Duxbury will be the next community highlighted.

"Duxbury has a lot of history to it," said Markella.